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HIGH-SCHOOL EDUCATION

VERY REV. DEAN MOYNA

1906



THE CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY OF CANADA

Incorporated

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Vancouver, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal

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67 Bond Street, Toronto

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No more vital question to-day claims the attention of thinking men than that of Education. If to educate be, according to the definition of Monsioun Dupanloup, "to cultivate, to train, to develop, to strengthen and to polish all the physical, intellectual, moral and religious faculties which constitute nature and human dignity in the child; to give to these faculties their perfect integrity, to establish them, in the plenitude of their power and their action," no more important matter can engage the minds of men who have at heart the interest of humanity and the glory of God. No wonder that we hear in every civilized country from all classes and creeds the anxious query: How shall we educate our children? How shall we best fit them for the discharge of their social, political and religious obligations? All seem to realize that the true happiness and prosperity of the nation depends upon a satisfactory solution of this vital question; but, unfortunately, there are many and conflicting opinions as to the meaning of Education and as to the manner in which it ought to be imparted. Educational problems in no place can be regarded as in a state of rest, not to say finality. They may be considered rather as a series of experimental advances in which the views of one set of thinkers prevail for a time and then give place to others arguing from a different base of generalization.

The education of an individual is the development, the unfolding, of an individual—body and soul. It is something physical, mental and moral. In each of these orders it implies a continuous supply of material for the new and the higher exercise of the powers developed. It is the man who is to be educated, the temple

of man, sanctified in his origin, sanctified in his destiny, sanctified in Christ by the elevation of human nature to individual substantial union with the divine in the personality of the Incarnate God. There are few subjects outside of those which are handed over to politics and partizan journalism upon which more is written amongst us to-day than is written upon the subject of Education. Where once we had teachers now we have teachers of teachers. The shelves of the libraries are laden with books, pamphlets, magazines, journals, reviews—all occupied with the great subject of Education. We hear endlessly of Conferences and Conventions and Institutes and Congresses called to discuss the ever-present question of universal interest. "Views" upon Education are always in demand. When "views" upon any subject are in demand we all know there are multitudinous orators waiting for their turn to thrill the audience. In such cases, as generally happens, those in the throng who are most competent to speak will find it hard to get even the recognition which is necessary to a hearing. Unfortunately, the word "Education" is very widely taken to mean only a part of what it really means. The laws of conduct, the rules of the building and establishment of character are often assigned a minor place or are treated as a negligible quantity.

When you speak of building, let us say a temple, you mean that you intend to build a structure that will be harmonious in the strength and proportion of walls, foundation and roof. Our pedagogies, if applied to Architecture, would make all walls without foundation or roof. It would resemble a science that was occupied with walls and windows and mullions and buttresses, and rich columns and carved capitals and bold frescoes and tessellate floors. It would be a science that provided no foundation to rest the structure on, no footings, as the architect terms them. Above it spreads only a roof of paper which yields no protection and has no binding force on the walls. Without strong foundation all the walls and buttresses and columns could not support the roof needed to give the edifice stability, the roof of character and morality, which must be the shield of safety to the human temple divine, when the storms of adversity come to try it, when the

flood gates of passion are opened on it. Even under the withering sun of daily life, its scant covering will be scared and warped and seamed until it is blown away by the slightest breeze or washes away under the softest rain.

What then should be our aim? Education. The education of what? The education of the man, of the human being. And what is man? An angel? No. Then just only an animal? No. Man is a person—the union of matter and spirit. Now, what do we want to do? We want to educate the man—the animal nature and the free intelligent spiritual nature. How is this to be done? Shall we turn our attention wholly to the animal nature? Shall our chief aim be to make the man as strong as an ox and as fleet as a deer? Shall we devote our best efforts to the training up of a race of lifters, runners and punchers? There is a due physical development which we can have without devoting our lives to mere physical culture, a development which, with moral and mental culture, really fits the body to resist disease better than it can be so fitted by turning it into knots of muscle.

Man is not all body. He is especially soul, spiritual soul. He has the power of both receiving and retaining truth; he can acquire knowledge. Too much stress must not, however, be laid on this process of receptivity and retention. It is good in its place—it is not everything. Another phase of culture is imperatively demanded for the formation of the true man. We may spend our lives learning lists of kings and dates and battles, lists of birds and animals and reptiles and fishes, lists of rocks and strata and minerals and plants, lists of stars and rivers and mountains, lists of algebraical formulæ and philosophical theories, lists of writers, novelists and their fictitious characters. We may make ourselves living dictionaries and encyclopædias. You might do the same with the phonograph, which would indeed be more exact in reproducing what it had received. But with all this the development may not be a harmonious development of the whole man, or even of the intellectual man. The chief part, the entire moral side of human nature, may be overlooked. It is by the exercise of the

habits of the moral virtues that man's great work in life is to be done. And it is a far harder task to form a single moral virtue than to become a philosopher or a mathematical phenomenon. There is no natural way of acquiring the virtue but by instruction, study, discipline and exercise. One may learn practically the rules for government in the syntax of a foreign language in less time than it will take him to become proficient in the government of his temper. Strangely enough we find many a student applying himself a thousand times more assiduously to the mastery of the unruly Greek syntax than to the mastery of his unruly temper. Yet the control of his temper is vastly more important to him than the habit of the Greek syntax, not only in his separate individual existence, but in his domestic life, in his social life, in his professional pursuits and in his civil life. It is indeed the control and judicious exercise of the emotions, it is the possession and practice of the moral virtues that prove the man to be a man, first in his unseen life and then in his dealings with his family, with his friends, with the commonwealth. The exercise of the hidden virtues, of the domestic and social virtues, is a thing that enters into the daily life of every man. The Astronomy and Chemistry and Algebra and smattering of languages that absorb the time and energies of the period of formation are things that enter into the life of very few. We never say a man is a man for the reason that he has spent so many years at school and college stuffing his head with Physiology and Botany and French and Mineralogy and with all the ologies on the list. Hence the better education is necessarily the one that forms to the domestic, social and civil virtues which make the *man*—the man that is needed in the family, in the state, in every civil role. We appreciate very highly the advantages of a good secular education, but whilst prepared to admit that ignorance may be the parent of vice, we vigorously deny that intelligence is always the concomitant of virtue. Experience has clearly demonstrated that the education of the head, without the education of the heart, is a menace to society; it is in itself conducive to indulgence in crime, by sharp-

ening the intellect and discovering new opportunities for the ingenuity of the wickedly inclined.

The Atheist who denies the existence of God, and the Agnostic who says we cannot know there is a God, would have us exclude God from our system of education. They would substitute "natural Ethics" for the religious training of the child. They profess to believe that the child's moral nature may be cultivated by appealing to his honor, to his sense of propriety, to his respect for the rights of others. No Christian can accept such a substitute for religious training. Morality cannot be separated from religion. Religion is a system of fundamental truths with corresponding Ethical duties, and there can be no duty that is not based on some correlative dogmatic truth. To exclude God, therefore, from the system of Education is to exclude religion and morality, and to fail in the first and most essential requisite for a true education. A system of National Education not based on Christianity is an imposture, says Cardinal Manning. It is not Education. Call it National Instruction if you will, but in the name of Christianity and also of truth, let it not be called Education.

We have dwelt longer on this general phase of the Education question than may be deemed in good taste, particularly in a paper on "Higher Education." Our only excuse is that unless these preliminary fundamental principles are properly understood our views on Higher Education may be misinterpreted or unintelligible. Doubtless the day will come when enlightened men of all parties will recognize that the enforced divorce between Religion and Education is injurious to the best interests of society and the state. God speed the day.

In dealing with our theme of Higher Education, we take a Clergyman's privilege of dividing it into three points: 1, its province; 2, its present condition in Ontario; 3, its requirements.

By High School Education is here meant that which holds a middle place between the groundwork of the primary school and the finished work of the University. It supplies the student with framework of a liberal education. It unfolds to him the most

perfect languages and literature of ancient and modern times, enables him to unravel the thoughts and discover the art of the greatest authors. It furnishes him with precepts and models to practise composition in its varied kinds, inculcates the requisites of good writing and speaking, and puts at his command such a knowledge of the form and substance of literature as will fit him to pursue gracefully and efficiently professional studies or some other avocation in life. In Mathematics and Science High School Education supplies all that is needed for sound mental discipline as well as for the taking up of purely technical or scientific pursuits.

It may indeed be said that secondary Education is by far the most important of all phases of education. A country or a people is as a rule what its High Schools make it. For, whilst the University gives or is supposed to give perfect training only to the few, and the primary schools supply the elementary educational wants of the many, it is the High Schools which train the minds and set in motion the brains of the great bulk of thinkers. The youth who has pursued a good course of Secondary Education is fitted on the one hand for the higher and broader culture of the University, and on the other is well equipped for the work of life. His mind is so well disciplined that he can bring it to bear on all problems that present themselves, and his store of knowledge is such, as to be, when ripened by experience, sufficient for all practical purposes.

The benefits of a High School Education are within reach of nearly everyone in this Ontario of ours in the High Schools and Collegiate Institutes, Denominational Colleges, Ladies' Colleges and Convents. It is not possible for the enlightened mind not to sympathize with the generous and determined efforts of the people of our country to educate their youth, even when one may hold as we do that the system is defective in important requisites. Collegiate Institutes and High Schools are the State aided institutions for imparting a higher education. They hardly go far enough and the training therein lacks in thoroughness. It would be much better to take up a moderate number of subjects and master these

well, than to encourage a smattering of subjects. A retrograde step has also been lately taken in them whereby the classical course is no longer obligatory in the teachers' course. I fear this is giving way to the pedagogy of gush, that has brought the typical student of to-day to imagine that earnest efforts and drudgery are essential for the mastery of the Classics. The tonic that comes from driving the will to perform unpleasant duties is not relished by the Twentieth Century student. The classical course of studies is undoubtedly the best preparation for the liberal professions, as well as the best foundation for all liberal culture. The acquisition of knowledge is anything but poetical or romantic. It is very often associated in the memory with disagreeable headaches, with lonely vigils, and with discouragements. The modern attempts to find a royal road thereto, or to travel it vicariously have hitherto ended in failure. It is a heavy burden laid upon the fallen children of Adam, who must realize at some period of life the full significance of that inspired utterance: "He that addeth knowledge, addeth also labor." On the whole, the High Schools of this country are doing fair work from a secular standpoint. The high intellectual and practical training which is now imparted in them and the Technical Schools is causing and will cause still more in the future, a keen competition in all walks of life; and the day is not far distant when anyone in this country who aspires to a position above that of a common laborer must be equipped not only with the primary but with the secondary Education, whether literary, scientific, or technical.

The High Schools of this country are Protestant or Secular. They are certainly non-Catholic. The Catholic Colleges or Convents are beyond the means of the majority of our youth, and are founded and conducted by religious Orders or Communities. They are private unendowed institutions, and as such they depend entirely on the fees of pupils for subsistence, consequently they cannot open their doors to the large body of Catholic youth who are too poor to pay even a moderate fee, and they can afford to teach only such subjects as do not require expensive installation. Hence the field of their labors is circumscribed and the kind of education

they give is governed by economic considerations. They only exist in the large centres of Catholic population. It is sometimes said, too, that they are not indigenous to the soil here in Ontario. Personally, we do not think there is much in this objection. A Catholic school is sufficiently indigenous for Catholics no matter where situated. So much, however, we admit cannot always be said regarding the supreme control of these institutions. This is not shutting our eyes to the fact that this is the age and America the home of applied Sciences. Under these circumstances for the one boy out of ten who may hope to make a living out of the fruits of a Classical Education, nine others will find their time wasted to a large extent, unless they get an opportunity of technical training also. Electrical, Mechanical and Civil Engineering, Mining, skilled workmanship in Manufactures, expert methods in business—these are the fields where the largest amount of valuable livelihoods may be obtained. Our Catholic laity have not one-tenth of the representation they ought to have in these and other walks of secular ambition. Shall our present Catholic youth, when grown to manhood, be also excluded from them? There is therefore no organized system of Higher Education for Catholics in this country. We have a primary system of Catholic Public Schools where the faith of Catholic children is safeguarded and the secular education given is kept well abreast of the times. In our own town of Orillia it is acknowledged by all that the Catholic Public School is the best primary school in the town—nay, in the district. What is to become of the children who have passed through our Catholic Primary Schools? Here serious difficulties confront us. The problem is no doubt complex and delicate in itself, yet nothing is to be gained by shutting our eyes, or endeavoring to ignore it. These children must either take their chances in life with what they have acquired, or else go and seek Higher Education in the High Schools or elsewhere. The first feature of this alternative is to start them in life heavily handicapped. It is a case of warfare analogous to that sometimes carried on with the rude weapons of the semi-civilized against the keen, deadly, precise arms of civilization. Extraordinary talents and moral worth may

sometimes give the advantage to the less highly educated, just as dauntless courage and headlong bravery have more than once given victory to the stone hatchet, boomerang or arrow against rifle, sword and cannon. But in the one case as in the other, there can be no doubt where victory will perch in the end. As surely as the undisciplined heroism of the barbarian must go down before the serried square and bristling phalanx of disciplined troops, so too must the imperfectly educated, how great soever their natural gifts and talents may be, yield to the discipline, the culture, the manifold resources which Higher Education gives. It is a serious matter for the Church to leave large sections of her children in an educational condition where they may be exposed to blame their Faith for their secular disadvantages.

The other alternative, namely attendance at non-Catholic High Schools is very objectionable, though frequently not to say generally adopted. To our minds there is far less danger in allowing young children to attend the non-Catholic Public Schools than in permitting the frequentation of non-Catholic High Schools. There is a change of method and discipline, a sudden stoppage of all religious teaching, just at that age which requires the most vigilant moral training, and when studies are entered upon which especially need the direction of a religious teacher. It is a terrible ordeal for Catholic youth to be introduced by non-Catholic or unchristian teachers to the sensualities and heresies of some literature and to the misrepresentations of some histories. Hatred of the Church, hatred of the Monks of the middle ages, hatred of the syllogism and hatred of the Jesuits seems to be written in huge capitals on every page of the secular historian. If we consider the dreadful cost of a diluted faith and morals, at which Higher Education has to be acquired by our youth in non-Catholic institutions, there ought to be no hesitation about making a supreme effort, to supply them with the training they need, whilst safeguarding that which is the most precious of all possessions.

It is surely not beyond the ability and wisdom of our legislators to devise a means whereby our Catholic Public School system should

be supplemented by the Catholic High School conducted as a public institution, controlled by Catholic trustees, insisting on a certain standard for the entrance to, and pursuit of its course of studies. Let it then be brought into competition on their own curriculum with the non-Catholic Public High Schools, and the thought that the school as a whole would be judged by its success at the Departmental Examinations would stimulate teachers and taught to strain every nerve so as not to be beaten by their competitors.

Do not our Catholic Colleges and Convents supply adequately the want of which we complain? We unhesitatingly answer, No. They exist only in large centres. They are not sufficiently diffused to satisfy the popular demand. Their inadequacy arises from no fault of theirs, but from the special nature of their organization. Our Colleges and Convents depend for subsistence on the very small fees which the general poverty of our people can afford to give. All who are at all acquainted with educational matters know that with no other resources but the fees of students, it would be utterly impossible to build, equip and man an educational institution. It is only bodies of men who give their services for nothing, and whose personal requirements for living are reduced to a minimum, that can dispense any education worthy of the name without endowments or state aid. It is to be feared that very few realize the amount of sacrifice made by the religious orders in this respect, just as very few realize the excellent work they are doing, notwithstanding the notorious financial disadvantages under which they labor. There is nothing further from our intention than to say one disparaging word against these institutions. They may need some changes,—call it Reformation if you will,—but such reformation must be from within. The most that an outsider can do is to make suggestions. This we shall proceed to do with all reverence but courageously.

A.—Teachers and Professors in these Institutions should make a good solid course in Pedagogy—the theory that everyone who thoroughly understands any subject will make a good teacher of it has been long exploded.

B.—They should require of their students a standard for entrance, a standard in the various steps of the course, and a well-defined standard for its completion, and insist on its attainment. This will prevent rambling outside the programme and wasting the student's time. It should be on guard particularly against the faddists and theorists who are always most ready to assert that efficient teachers must have liberty to follow their own course. The great majority of Professors do their work the better for being directed and controlled by men of more educational experience and sounder views. Assuming that a programme of studies is sound and judicious, who will assert that the most competent teacher is unduly hampered by being obliged to confine his work within its limits? He will of course have perfect freedom to apply his own methods of teaching to the mastery of that programme. The more interesting he makes his teaching by references and illustrations that have a real bearing on his subject, the better for his class. He may and he should teach his students to see around the subject, as well as into it, and through it. The human mind needs freedom for its healthy development. It should never be bound fast in the fetters of a rigid system which must in the end enfeeble if not paralyse its powers.

C.—There should be an age requirement for entrance as well as a graduation rule; this is to our mind absolutely necessary for proper development of character, which is after all one of the principal ends of education. Younger boys can be controlled and disciplined in a manner suitable to their age far better in a separate institution than in the annex of a College, and youths that range from seventeen to twenty-five can and ought to be handled in a manner becoming their years and not held under the same regime as children. There is something ridiculous in an institution attempting to be at one and the same time a University, a College, an Academy and a preparatory school.

Here arises the question: Why not approach the legislature for aid for these institutions? At the same time approach the Religious Orders for satisfactory guarantees that if the state should, necessary reforms, power of inspection and a certain measure of control be permitted on their side. One of these conditions would certainly be that all teachers should submit to a public test of efficiency as teachers. There is no gainsaying the contention that he who expects aid from the Public Chest should submit to a public test of efficiency. In the absence of the Catholic High Schools in the chief centres of Catholic populations we certainly

are of opinion that this would be the next best solution of the difficulty. It would at all events have many advantages. It would pave the way for Catholic High Schools. It would give the students of these institutions an official standing in the Educational system of our country. It would finally bring these institutions into competition with the High Schools of the country and supply us with a standard by which we could form a just estimate of the work done by them. It is safe to presume that when that day comes our Catholic Colleges here will be able to compete as successfully as they have done in other countries where there is a fair field and no favor. At least this is a conclusion forced on everyone who carefully examines the programme of studies pursued in most of our Colleges and compares it with that of similar non-Catholic institutions. In ancient and modern languages, in pure mathematics and in many of the fine arts, our graduates probably excel, and in most of our Colleges there is a course of mental philosophy which far surpasses the corresponding course given elsewhere. We must never forget that true scholarship consists principally of three things: a broad and strong grasp of unassailable principles, an erudition and power of applying principles to the sum total of material.

Just a word regarding an objection frequently raised against competition in Educational matters, that it begets superficiality and what is technically called cramming. Teachers and pupils who go down in the intellectual contest are too apt to indulge in invective against the successful crammers. Competition does not necessarily beget cram, whereas absence of competition invariably begets stagnation. The best schools are those that make competition and emulation between the classes of the school, and between individuals of the class, as sharp and exciting as possible. Why should competition be essentially evil when extended from individuals and classes to schools? The proper remedy to prevent cramming is to suppress altogether as being no evidence of real preparation the first twenty-five per cent. gained by a student of the total marks assigned to a subject. Thus if a student scored fifty-one marks in a subject to which two hundred marks are assigned, he should get credit for one mark only. Again every mark gained over seventy-five per cent. in a subject should count as two. The effect of this rule would be to encourage a thorough mastery of the subjects attached to composition and unseen translations that cannot be presented for examination. In the languages let importance be crammed.

There is no reason on earth why, when a year's work comes to be tested by a competent Examiner, the students of the best teachers should not score the highest marks. It may be objected that the success of grinders in preparing students for University and Civil Service Examinations proves that success is best secured by cramming. The answer is obvious, the grinder would never succeed in preparing students for a difficult examination if these students had not got a previous education. It is education that fashions and tempers the weapon of intellect; grinding may give the sharp edge for immediate use.

Great care and discernment should be exercised in the choice of examiners. Just as a judicious programme points out to the teacher the normal course of a proper education, so a judicious examination guides him in the manner in which he ought to teach that programme. Examiners have it in their power to direct the work of teachers and pupils along true or false educational lines, to ignore or even encourage vicious methods of teaching, or to detect and punish them; to lower the standard of education or keep it on a high and healthy level. Take the single case of an examiner, for the sake of illustration, who has to set a paper on the text book of languages. We will suppose him to have the qualifications of a really good examiner, not the young man or woman who has just ceased to be a student and is totally without experience, the busy barrister or solicitor or clergyman who has only what Australians would call "a gentleman's knowledge of the subject," but for whom a cheque from the Educational Department is a desirable thing at the approach of vacation. Not only is he well acquainted with the author's writings generally, but he has mastered this particular one thoroughly. He has recently gone over the ground again carefully and minutely. His thoughts have rested on every page, until he has penetrated the whole meaning and seen the workings of the author's mind. He sees the elevation, the order, the beauty of the writer's thoughts. He has discovered the principles which underlie and animate his style and character. He knows the passages in which he nods. He knows the circumstances in which the author is at his best, and the conditions under which he wrote; he is familiar with the political, social and literary life of the time, and sees the fitness of every illustration. Equipped in this way an examiner is a guide. His questions will deal with the author's thoughts, especially his cardinal thoughts; with beauties of expression that are characteristic, not with exceptional slips; with passages that are the genuine mirror of the writer's style, not with those of

exceptional construction or of doubtful authenticity. In a word the paper he sets will show the lines upon which the work should have been studied; it will elicit a knowledge or ignorance of the mind of the writer and of the text, not of the slipshod commentaries of annotators. Tell me this: What chance will the crammed student, who has been well named a mental cripple, have when confronted with such a paper? But I may be told all this is very well in the abstract and it would be very well in practice if we had ideal examiners. But are our examiners what they ought to be? Instead of setting papers which test the knowledge of the students in the essentials of the text book do they not frequently pick out what is unimportant or absurd? There is too much truth in the objection, and there is a great deal of room for improvement in examinations. But if in this point and many others half the talents and energy that are now expended in advocating dangerous experiments in education, were employed in preventing the existing system from being abused, there would be no need of revolutionary changes in the matter of examinations. Written examinations too should also be supplemented by oral tests.

If the tone of our remarks should appear somewhat dogmatic, we can say with all candour, that we have no disposition to dogmatize in a matter on which we are conscious there are so many others who have a far better right than we can claim to speak with authority. Whatever may be the solution of the difficulty, the importance of the question cannot be too strongly urged. Higher Education is the plateau on which the war of good and evil, light and darkness, will ever be decided. It is here that the strong and skilled forces which are the mainstay of truth are at the same time trained and brought into action. The results will influence the masses of young recruits on the plains below, as well as the select posts of observation on the mountain peaks above. It is from the plateau of Higher Education that the proper stimulus can be given to the masses in the primary schools. It is from hence, too, must be derived the select forces of the University.

We have given our views with considerable freedom and have aimed at being intensely practical rather than emotional or brilliant. If the instinct of organization were banished from every other breast, it ought to find a loyal welcome in the heart of the teacher. He is the official exponent of system, method and order. The Church is not an abstraction—it is a concrete reality. You and we are the Church. Let us each in our respective spheres do our best towards promoting one of the most important questions of the hour,—The Higher Education of the Catholic Youth.